

Remarks/Arguments

The examiner in an Office Action dated 13 September 2002 rejected all of the pending claims 1-17. As such, this Office Action and the references cited therein have been carefully considered and this amendment is now presented in an effort to comply with Patent Office requirements and advance prosecution of the application.

The examiner rejected claims 1-4, 10, 14 and 17, under 35 USC 102, as being anticipated by White. The examiner further rejected claims 1-17, under 35 USC 103, as being obvious over White in view of Bautz. With this amendment, all three independent claims 1, 10 and 17 have been amended to call for more than one annular bearing supporting each finger support. As such, these new independent claims more closely resemble cancelled claims 5 and 11 which were the subject of the obvious rejection.

White discloses a retractable finger mechanism for a combine wherein an eccentric axle 36 is located in a drum-shaped shell 10. Sets of two and three fingers 39 and 40 are rotatively mounted to the eccentric axle 36 by bearing 41. Each set of fingers is secured to the eccentric axle by a single annular bearing.

Bautz discloses a retractable finger mechanism comprising a drum-shaped shell 2, finger supports 4 and fingers 1. A cam path 7 is mounted to a concentric axle 3 and is engaged by rollers 5 extending from the finger supports 4.

The examiner states:

“White discloses the claimed invention as detailed above, except for ... using multiple bearings to attach each finger support to the axle instead of one.”

Bautz does not disclose mounting finger supports to an eccentric axle. As such, it would not be obvious to combine these references in the manner suggested by the examiner.

"Version with Markings to Show Changes Made"

1. A rotary conveyor comprising:

a drum-shaped shell having openings;

an eccentric axle arranged inside the shell, the eccentric axle defining an axial direction;

finger supports being rotatively mounted to the eccentric axle, each finger support is rotatively mounted to the eccentric axle by several annular bearings spaced apart in the axial direction along the eccentric axle, the finger supports extend radially outward from and parallel to the eccentric axle;

a plurality of fingers are mounted to each finger support, the fingers extending through the openings in the drum-shaped shell such that fingers on one finger support are arranged next to one another in the axial direction, the finger supports are distributed around the circumference of the eccentric axle, whereby the finger supports extend axially within a portion of the drum-shaped shell having openings for the fingers.

7. A rotary conveyor as defined by claim 4 6 wherein the fingers are removably attached to the finger supports.

10. A rotary conveyor comprising:

a rotatable drum-shaped shell having openings;

a non-rotating eccentric axle arranged inside the shell, the non-rotating eccentric axle defining an axial direction;

finger supports being rotatively mounted to the non-rotating eccentric axle, each finger support is rotatively mounted to the non-rotating eccentric axle by at least two annular bearings, the finger supports extend radially outward from and parallel to the non-rotating eccentric axle;

a plurality of fingers are mounted to each finger support, the fingers extending through the openings in the drum-shaped shell such that fingers on one finger support are arranged next to one another in the axial direction.

12. A rotary conveyor as defined by claim 10 11 wherein the finger supports are offset relative to one another in the axial direction.

17. A rotary conveyor comprising:

a rotatable shell having openings;

a non-rotating eccentric axle arranged inside the shell;

finger supports being rotatively mounted to the non-rotating eccentric axle, each finger support is rotatively mounted to the non-rotating eccentric axle by at least two bearings axially spaced along the non-rotating eccentric axle, the finger supports extend radially outward from and parallel to the non-rotating eccentric axle, the finger supports being located inside the rotatable shell;

a plurality of fingers are mounted to each finger support, the fingers extending through the openings in the shell.

In conclusion, it is believed that this application is in condition for allowance, and such allowance is respectfully requested.

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Respectfully,



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